

Heliports and Helicopter Operations – Stakeholder Input Process

Second Stakeholder Meeting – Wednesday, January 30, 2013

Meeting Attendees

Fewer stakeholders were able to attend this second meeting, however, the group was still very well balanced and included representation from neighborhood representatives, event representatives, helicopter operators, and property representatives.

Stakeholders	
Name	Organization/Group
Jeff Jack	Zilker Neighborhood Association
Max Woodfin	South River City Citizens
Pat King	Austin Neighborhood Council
Richard Hatfield	Planning Commission
Mark Richard	McRae Aviation
John Lawson	Fins Up Aviation
John Conley	Conley Sports/Live Strong Marathon
Lou Vasta	Circuit of the Americas
Steve Henry	Henry Aviation
Cyndi Collen	Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association
Melissa Hawthorne	Barton Hills Neighborhood Association
Mike Walker	C3 Presents and Zilker Neighborhood

Staff and Consultants	
Name	Organization/Group
Dale Murphy	Austin Airport Advisory
George Farris	Austin Airport Advisory
Rose Marie Klee	Austin Airport Advisory
Shane Harbinson	Aviation Department
Loren Lintner	Aviation Department
Joseph Medici	Aviation Department
Francisco Garza	Aviation Department
Stephen Dick	Aviation Department
Lynda Courtney	Planning and Development
Greg Dutton	Planning and Development
Christopher Coons	RW Armstrong
Byron Chavez	RW Armstrong
Arin Gray	CD&P
Julie Richey	CD&P

Meeting Summary

The meeting began with a very short presentation to give attendees the agenda and objectives and to review the highlights of the work accomplished at the previous meeting. A draft definition of the proposed third category for permitting was shared for discussion as well.

Because several previous attendees were unable to attend, the two working groups were combined and all in attendance worked through suggestions and recommendations together. This allowed for a longer group session and provided the opportunity to discuss the divergent issues, concerns, and opinions efficiently. For the first half of the discussion John Conley served as the scribe and then CD&P served as the scribe as there were no volunteers from the attendees.

Full Group Discussion Notes

Summary

The group began with a discussion of an appropriate public notification process for each permit type. Additional notification requirements were agreed to for the current temporary use permits and additional efforts notifications were discussed for the new category for the temporary special use category. Stakeholders felt the existing process for Permanent Heliport Permits was sufficient as it goes through the conditional use permit public notification process.

The group began discussing the draft definition for temporary permits with over 18 uses. It was decided that the definition needed to be further defined and the group agreed that there should be three categories for helicopter facilities:

Category 1 – Temporary helicopter facility with 1-18 operations

Category 2 – Temporary helicopter facility with greater than 18 operations including, but not limited to, air taxi services

Category 3 – Permanent helicopter facility

*Note – in this summary an operation is considered as 1 flight event (either a takeoff or a landing)

Various options for Category 2 requirements were discussed including reasonable capacity and location for an approved site. Additional points included:

- Limiting the number of takeoff and landing 8 flight operations per hour (4 takeoffs and 4 landings total)
- Limiting the number of aircraft to 3 allowed per site
- Require the submission of an operation plan including identify holding zones in application
- Limits of permitted sites within a geographic area, perhaps including a sliding scale based on the sites compatibility with the surrounding neighborhoods
- City should research additional site availability north of the river to service downtown uses
- Safety reviews for the areas surrounding the permitted site
- Compliance, enforcement, and penalties to the permit holder for not following their operation plan
- Criteria for evaluation of approval including safety, environmental factors, and neighbor compatibility
- City should consider having a noise study performed by the applicant or reviewing existing helicopter noise data to determine how large of a footprint will be affected

Insurance requirements were again discussed and it was noted that additional insurance requirements should be reviewed for the aircraft rather than the site, and that a reasonable requirement per aircraft was \$5 million with the City of Austin named as an insured. It was mentioned that the current insurance requirement does not pertain to aircraft but only to limit City of Austin liability at the landing site for general liability (example to cover slip and fall injury claims).

The group discussed the need for a City owned permanent facility in the downtown area as a long-term solution. Suggestions for funding included a special tax for helicopter operations.

The formation of an Austin Helicopter Association was also discussed. This could be a volunteer group that monitors compliance of helicopter operations and that could report violations to ABIA/City. The

possibility requiring this groups association for permit applications was discussed, but discontinued as the City felt they could not require this.

Formal Recommendations

Category 1

Require notification to neighborhood associations near the proposed site or if no associations exist, notification to property owners within 500 feet from site. Notification should be the responsibility of the Director/City.

Criteria for approval of temporary permit should include:

- Safety
- Environmental
- Neighborhood Compatibility
- Staff should further develop this criteria

Section 13-1-181, no. 7 should be revised to say per day to match existing FAA requirements.

Category 2

Require notification to neighborhood associations near the proposed site and notification to property owners within 500 feet of site. Notifications should include ability for recipients to reply with comments for staff review before approval is granted. A timeframe for comments will need to be established. Again, notification should be the responsibility of the Director/City.

This category of permit will apply to those operations with more than 18 flight operations, but still temporary in nature.

Application should require an operational plan for the site, including plans for holding zones if aircraft is unable to land at the designated times.

A sliding scale for permit approval should be developed including things like the closer a site is to a neighborhood, fewer flight events/landing zones are permitted.

Each aircraft landing at a permitted facility should be required to have a transponder to track flights and operations. This will help the City with enforcement of requirements.

There should be a limit to 3 aircraft allowed to use each permitted site. There should also be a limit to 8 flight operations per hour per site when close to a neighborhood. A formula should be developed by the City which takes into account distance from a special event and neighborhood compatibility.

Penalties for violation and compliance should be the responsibility of the permit holder.

Criteria used by APD, AFD, and EMS for sign off on the application should be included in the application. Considerations for sign off should be extended beyond the actual site to consider neighborhood evacuation routes, topography, vegetation, and current weather conditions (specifically droughts).

The City should further review insurance requirements and consider including a requirement of at least \$5 million for each aircraft using a site naming the City of Austin as an additionally insured.

Application should include notation of topographical features within 4000 feet radius of proposed helicopter facility. This will assist the Director in noting things like canyons that cause noise amplification.

Application should include description of critical environmental features within 4000 feet radius of proposed helicopter facility. City could also consider identifying critical environmental features in the noise sensitive areas.

Staff should study the option of a City owned permanent facility for downtown including cost and funding (perhaps a tax on helicopter operations similar to hotel tax).

Each landing zone should require its own permit and no more than 1 landing zone should be allowed per permit. If one site has the capacity to handle two landing zones, then two permits will be required for that site.

Operational hours for Category 2 need to be reviewed. Regarding the current Formula 1 event, the group agreed to 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. because of the time of year (sunset) and the anticipated lighter flight traffic later in the evening (attendees will want to leave right after event). City should also identify another site to relieve flight traffic from Embassy Suites (specifically look north of the river).

The City should better define flight events and/or operations as each event meaning 1 takeoff or 1 landing or change it to an event and/or operation being a landing and takeoff and then remain consistent in labeling of events and/or operations.

The group felt a table or graphic representation would help identify the different requirements for each category. Jeff Jack made the suggestion for a table following the format below:

	Category 1 – Temp. Permit with less than 18 flight operations	Category 2 – Temp. Permit for more than 18 flight operations	Category 3 – Permanent helicopter facility
Definition			
FAA Requirements	Required if >10 operations in 24 hours	Yes	Yes
Notification Process	Share information with Neighborhood Associations near site or if no Neighborhood Association property owners within 500 feet	Share information and offer opportunity for comment to properties and neighborhood associations within 500 feet	Share information and offer opportunity for comment to properties and neighborhood associations within 500 feet
Criteria for Approval	Minimum review of <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environment• Safety• Compatibility	Further review of <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Env – identify Env. Sensitive areas and topography within 4000 feet• Safety – neighborhood	Follow Conditional Use Permit regulations

		access and egress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compatibility - noise should remain near 65 DB 	
Decision	ABIA Director	ABIA Director	ABIA Director, Planning Commission, City Council
Appeal to City Council available	No	Yes	Yes
Review Process	30 Days	Need to define	Need to define
Distance from other sites	1.5 miles	Need to define	Need to define
Number of aircraft permitted to use site	Need to define	3	Unlimited
Number of flight operations per site	18 total	8 total takeoffs and landings per hour	

Summary of Comments Received Via Email:

Several comments were received from those that were unable to attend and those that had additional input after the group meeting. Comments ranged from the number of flight operations per site to possible penalties for not meeting requirements. Below are all comments received via email:

From: Mark Richard [mailto:mcraveav@realtime.net]
Sent: Thursday, January 31, 2013 1:24 PM
To: agray@cdandp.com
Subject: Helicopter Cat 2 Temporary Helistops-Operations

Hi Arin,

I would like to offer my ideas once again on the frequency of helicopter operations that a central or downtown Austin helistop might be able to sustain as an aid to both operations and noise considerations in the vicinity of a helistop.

In order to use a central Austin location and shuttle passengers to the COTA facility, each helicopter would only be able to complete an average of 2 round trips per hour. Since we are counting a take-off and landing as separate events then you are looking at 4 events per hour per helicopter. Each helicopter would be in the area of the helistop an average of 5 to 6 minutes while it approaches to land, load or unload passengers and then depart the site. This event would only occur twice an hour per helicopter. Since we agree that the central Austin or downtown area is a noise sensitive area, 8 events per hour or every 15 minutes would help decrease the need for helicopters to hold or circle while waiting to land at the helistop. Of course helistops that are permitted closer to the event site would have a shorter flight path routing and would be able to handle more trips per hour. Less sensitive areas such as industrial areas or less populated areas could maybe be permitted for increased frequency operations and more than 8 events per hour. A scale could be set up to give the helistop a rating number that is determined by looking at several factors and would authorize the number of events per hour or day for the particular helistop. Maybe a downtown site would have a rating that would allow the 8 events per hour off any one particular helistop while a less sensitive area might have a rating that would authorize twice that amount.

I suggest permitting the helistops on an “events per hour” rating other than specifying the number of helicopters that could use the helistop. You could have a situation, due to different flight paths, where several helicopters might be using the same helistop but still be required to adhere to the permitted total hourly frequency requirements.

Further, the permit could specify a required routing to and from the helistop along with a designated holding area if needed. If deviations from the routing occur, the helicopter operator could be required to submit a written explanation to the aviation department that would be kept in their file to be used in determining future permit requests.

Mark Richard
Director of Operations
McRae Aviation Services, Inc.
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Fax: 512-385-9620
www.mcraeaviation.com

Below is a table received from Richard Hatfield to demonstrate the difference between allowing only 3 aircrafts to use a specific landing zone versus allowing only 4 landing/takeoffs from each landing zone per hour. He believes the main concern is noise and the allowing only 4 landing/takeoffs each hour will protect the surrounding communities from noise better.

CAT II		Different Event	Formula ONE	Different Event	Different Event	Formula ONE
Time		Only 3 Aircraft per landing zone	Only 3 Aircraft per landing zone	Only 3 Aircraft per landing zone	Only 4 takeoff/landings per hour	Only 4 takeoff/landings per hour
		Round Trip 20 Min	Round Trip 20 Min	Round Trip 15 Min	4 Round Trips/Hr	4 Round Trips/Hr
		T/O & Landings	T/O & Landings	T/O & Landings	T/O & Landings	T/O & Landings
Start	700	9	9	12	4	4
	800	9	9	12	4	4
	900	9	9	12	4	4
	1000	9	9	12	4	4
	1100	9		12	4	
	1200	9		12	4	
	1300	9		12	4	
	1400	9		12	4	
	1500	9		12	4	
	1600	9		12	4	
	1700	9	9	12	4	4
	1800	9	9	12	4	4
	1900	9	9	12	4	4
	2000	9	9	12	4	4
End	2100					
Totals	14 Hrs	126	72	168	56	32
Ops/Hr		9	9	12	4	4
Minutes		6.7	6.7	5.0	15.0	15.0

C:\Users\Arin\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.Outlook\UT8QJWRG\Time_Minutes

-----Original Message-----

From: Rene Banglesdorf [mailto:rene@wepushtin.com]

Sent: Wednesday, January 30, 2013 5:01 PM

To: Arin Gray

Cc: Curt Banglesdorf; Scott Madole

Subject: Re: Helicopter Facilities Stakeholder Input Meetings

Arin, I am not going to be able to make the meeting tonight. I am home sick with a virus.

For what it's worth, I am happy to help the city in any way I can find a suitable spot that has the capacity to accommodate more than one helicopter at a time, which was the limitation we had with the embassy spot.

I think 18 landings a day is extremely restrictive, but scheduled landings 15 minutes apart would eliminate some of the headaches we had during F1 at embassy.

Rene Banglesdorf
512-818-0964

From: stacyriggsphoto@aol.com [mailto:stacyriggsphoto@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, January 29, 2013 1:04 PM
To: Arin Gray
Subject: Re: Helicopter Facilities Stakeholder Input Meetings

Arin,

I will not be able to attend meeting tomorrow night...but I would like to express my opinion regarding punishment to those that choose to disregard the ordinance.

I do believe a penalty should be in place to discourage pilots and operators from landing in the city without proper approval. This should be a severe enough penalty that makes it clear Austin is serious about this issue. A suggestion could be five times application fee (\$2,500 dollars) and it is a parking ticket issued to the registered owner. To document a violation I recommend any photograph that clearly shows the helicopter on the ground with a clear vision of the registration number of the helicopter or even if the registration number is not clear a good enough photo that can specify that particular helicopter. Even a description by a citizen could be enough if that particular helicopter can be identified.

My concerns are that some helicopter owners may choose to disregard this ordinance with no penalties in place.

Sincerely,
Randy Riggs
rriggs@alamohelicoptertours.com
210-259-9909